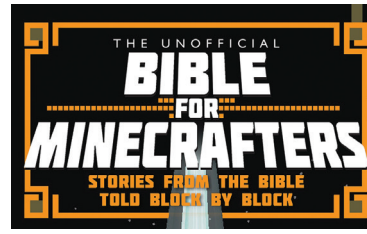




Wishing a merry Christmas and a happy new year to all of our readers.



Hope at Christmas time -  
centrespread



Win a minecraft Bible -  
page five



God in the Life Of -  
page 12

*'The light shines in the darkness...*



*...and the darkness has not  
overcome it'*



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## Tree House opens in White Waltham



PROJECT Rainbow in White Waltham, Berkshire, came to fruition with the opening of the Tree House. The Tree House, which has cost over £550,000, is a new community building which will provide a base for children and family work at White Waltham Church. The Home Secretary, Theresa May was among the dignitaries at the opening ceremony.

To read the full story go to [www.oxford.anglican.org/thetreehouse](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/thetreehouse)  
Photo by Chris Knight.

## New Director of Mission starts work

ANDREW Anderson-Gear (pictured right with Bishop Colin) has started his new role as the Director of Mission for the Oxford Diocese.

He was commissioned by Bishop Colin in a special service at St Lawrence's Church, North Hinksey, Oxford. Andrew was previously the Parish Development Advisor for Buckinghamshire.

Photo: Phil Hind



## Churches join forces on an expanding estate

A PARISH on a deprived estate on the edge of Oxford is joining forces with a packed city centre church.

St Mary's Headington, is based just outside the ringroad, on the Barton estate, an area where hundreds of new homes are set to be built to combat Oxford's chronic housing shortage. The church will be partnering with St Aldate's, to share resources and unlock its 'mission potential'.

The Area Dean for Cowley, The Revd Tim Stead said: "We had a vacancy and didn't just want to throw an incumbent in on their own in a difficult place and looked at a number of ideas for a partnership with a much larger church."

Tim said there is currently a small congregation at St Mary's, and with the new estate of up to 1,000 houses in the pipeline and the possibility of further expansion in the future, the parish could double or even triple in size. The Revd Eric Bosward will be moving to Headington from Preston in Lancashire, with his wife Lynn to take over at St Mary's. Eric will be part of the leadership team and attend weekly staff meetings at St Aldate's, a church that holds three services every Sunday and is often so full there is standing room only.

The Revd Charlie Cleverly, the Rector of

St Aldate's, said: "We have enjoyed very much the beginnings of a partnership with the people of St Mary's. St Mary's is a great community that will have a greater responsibility as new housing is built. We look forward to seeing what happens in the future as this exciting project develops." Trevor Jones, Chair of the PCC at St Mary's, said: "Over the past few months both churches have begun to embrace the idea. It's too early to make a judgement on success but we at St Mary's look forward to this exciting opportunity of working with St Aldate's to extend God's kingdom."

The Archdeacon of Oxford, the Ven. Martin Gorick, described plans for the partnership in a short film about the wider work of the Diocese. He said: "Barton is one of the five most deprived parishes in the whole diocese. There will be up to 3,000 new people moving to the area over the next few years and this is a once in a generation opportunity for the church."

On the website

Watch the video which tells this story and many others at <http://www.oxford.anglican.org/video-shows-archdeaconry-plans-are-bearing-fruit/>

## Bishop's role for Archdeacon Karen



Archdeacon Karen outside Salisbury Cathedral after her appointment was announced. Photo: Gerry Lynch.

THE Ven. Karen Gorham, the Archdeacon of Buckingham, is to be the 36th Bishop of Sherborne. The Bishop of Sherborne works in the Diocese of Salisbury with responsibility mainly for parishes in Dorset.

This makes Archdeacon Karen the eighth woman to be made a bishop in the Church of England. She said: "It has been a real privilege to serve the Church in Buckinghamshire for the last eight years. It's been a great place to be with its variety of contexts and traditions. I shall miss the people and places, and being part of the wider Oxford diocese, however I am really looking forward to this new challenge and getting to know new people and places."

"I have had a love of Dorset since childhood holidays and so it is with much joy that I respond to a call there to be part of God's mission as part of the Salisbury team. There is much to do in the weeks ahead, please pray for me in this transition, as I pray for you."

Archdeacon Karen has been Archdeacon of Buckingham since 2007. She has been a member of the Church of England General Synod for twelve years, and for the last two has served as a member of the Panel of Chairs.

The Acting Bishop of Oxford, the Rt Revd Colin Fletcher, Bishop of Dorchester, said, "As a Bishop's Staff we will miss Karen's presence very badly. Her passion for mission and her acute analytical ability, coupled with her concern for clergy well-being and her creativity have contributed a great deal to our life together. We and the Diocese as a whole, owe her a tremendous amount. Our loss is Salisbury's gain and we wish her well in her new role."

The Bishop of Buckingham, the Rt Revd Dr Alan Wilson, said: "Warmest congratulations both to Karen and the Diocese of Salisbury on their great news."

"Her ministry here has been spiritually refreshed and refreshing. She has been a wise, positive and resourceful friend to us all. She has also led strategic development not only of our archdeaconry plan, but also our whole diocesan team of archdeacons. She leaves with our richest blessing, love and prayers!"

Archdeacon Karen will be consecrated as a bishop on 24 February 2016 at Westminster Abbey. Her final day at work in the Diocese of Oxford will be 19 January. A farewell Choral Evensong takes place at All Saints High Wycombe at 3pm on Sunday 17 January.

## Theresa May joins turf cutting at St Andrew's

THERESA May, the Home Secretary, joined the Rt Revd Andrew Proud, the Bishop of Reading in a ground cutting ceremony at St Andrew's Church, Sonning, Berkshire, last month.

The ceremony marked the start of work on a new oak framed hall and church office.

The Revd Jamie Taylor, the Vicar, said: "There has been a church here for well over 1,000 years and the present building is much loved. However we are about much more than a beautiful building and recognise that the church is actually about people. This hall and office will not only enable us to better serve our regular congregation, but also give us the space to reach out to the communities of Charvil, Sonning, and Sonning Eye in new and exciting ways."

Photo by Chris Knight





## Christmas services broadcast on ChurchLive

TWO churches in the Oxford Diocese are joining a national project by broadcasting Christmas events using some of the most up-to-the-minute social media.

Dorchester Abbey's Posada Party on 20 December at 10.30am and St Luke's, Reading's Crib Service on 24 December at 4pm will be transmitted live via the social media streaming app Periscope. Periscope allows people to broadcast and watch events all over the world, simply using a tablet or smartphone with the app installed.

The ChurchLive project has been launched by the Church of England nationally and sees services broadcast from churches via Periscope. The services can then be watched again on the **katch.me/ChurchLive** website. While the service is recorded, another smartphone user will be logged in to respond to queries from people watching online.

The Revd Canon Sue Booy, the Rector of Dorchester Abbey, said: "It's exciting to be part of a really quite new project. We have a family who moved to the Caymen islands and they will be able to watch this. It is

one of the loveliest services with children doing crafts and enjoying the Christmas story."

The Revd Graeme Fancourt, from St Luke's, said: "This service will be full of people who don't normally come to church. We advertise it through social media and last year most of the people who came heard about it through Facebook or Twitter. It will be interesting to stream it online so that people can interact in different ways."

Tallie Proud, the Digital Media Officer at Church House Westminster, said: "We're really looking forward to these Christmas services on ChurchLive. During a time when lives are particularly busy, it will give people all over the world the opportunity to slow down, experience church at Christmas and hear about the birth of Christ."

Follow @ChurchLive on Twitter to be alerted when services are about to go live. Anyone interested in taking part can contact Tallie on 020 7898 1457 or talita.proud@churchofengland.org

## New classroom in Bradfield

CHILDREN at Bradfield CE School in Berkshire are delighted to be having lessons in a classroom that has been newly refurbished thanks to volunteers from the nearby church.

Headteacher, Jenny Slade, said she had earmarked the 'particularly tired' room for refurbishment. "But when I did the sums I realised I had enough money to buy the resources and IT needed but not enough to actually do the decorating." It was the beginning of the summer holidays and Jenny realised that if the room was to be redecorated, it would have to be done

by volunteers or staff. "Then one of my teachers asked I'd tried the church and I realised that was a really good point."

Members of St Peter's Church dropped their Bank Holiday plans and trooped to the school during the last weekend of August and re-furnished the classroom. Jenny said: "The furniture has just been delivered and we have a lovely new class room."

One of the team leaders from the church was Natasha Howlett, who also works at the school. She said: "It is so good when we can come together in such a practical way to support the work of the school."

## Helping children in Latin America

CARMEN Alvarez feels a definite calling to helping children and families to escape lives of poverty and violence in Latin America.

Her work empowers the Church to work for change in a society where children as young as seven-months old are dying at the hands of abusive family members. Youngsters end up living on the streets or critically ill in hospital.

Carmen is the Director of Networks and Programmes for Latin America for Viva Network, a charity with its headquarters in Oxford, and has been a medical doctor as well as working for Milton Keynes based World Vision and Unicef. She has a PhD in social sciences and health and MAs in human rights and theology and a BA in law.

"I loved being a medical doctor but God put a plan into my heart. When I was serving in my church I saw many people who were trying to help but they didn't know how to," she says. She chose to study theology because she says she wanted to prepare her heart in the right way for the work she felt led to do.

"Keeping passion and hope alive is a big challenge. Another is keeping the Church involved in offering solutions. The Church in Latin America has a history of working only in its buildings. We are working to get church leaders and congregations to work outside of their walls."

One of the hardest elements of the work

of the team Carmen leads in Costa Rica and Bolivia, is finding children aged five to nine on the street with no food or adequate clothes.

"It's about helping them and their families. It's exciting when you can help them go to school and college, and maybe with scholarships to go to university."

Carmen has urged churchgoers in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire to help by praying, by getting involved in practical work for Viva and by donating money. "Whenever you invest in any of the ways I have mentioned you are investing in life. I want to help believers in churches to know that it is possible to change the lives of the children who are suffering now," she added.



On the website

For more on Carmen's work and to watch a short video interview with her go to <http://blog.viva.org/index.php/2015/11/26/catalyst-change/>

## Snowy sleepout raises £42,000



Jenny from Wycombe's Tesco store in her makeshift home. Photo: Dr Michael Bowker

ALMOST 100 people took part in Wycombe Homeless Connection's Big Sleepout which raised £42,000. Using cardboard boxes and plastic sheeting to keep out the winds and snow, volunteers slept out overnight at three locations: 58 took part at All Saints' Church in the centre of High Wycombe; 17 at St Mary's in Beaconsfield; and 22 at All Saints' in Marlow.

Louise Coupland, previously a rough sleeper, judged the cardboard shelters for their aesthetic and practical qualities. Sheena Dykes, WHC Chair of Trustees said: "It makes such a difference to know that we have secured that level of funding. Just as importantly, we have engaged with a huge number of local people who have clearly demonstrated their support for what we do. We are so very grateful."

Wycombe Homeless Connection first opened its winter night shelter in January 2008, as a project of local churches. It also now has an advice and support centre open every weekday morning in the town centre for the homeless and vulnerably housed. [www.wyhoc.org.uk](http://www.wyhoc.org.uk)

## What's your longest journey?



The Christingle service in Appleton. Photo: Phil Sapwell.

CHE Ramsden, Product development manager of the Children's Society spoke at Appleton's Christingle Service, asking 'What's the longest journey you've ever been on?' An Eritrean lad aged 10, whose brother died as a child soldier, fled to seek asylum in the UK arriving in Oxford two years later. He had travelled 3,500 miles by foot, bus, train (underneath the bus/train - hiding, not in a carriage), by boat, in lorries - hiding, in scary, dark places. Eventually he was tipped out of a lorry at the Oxford M40 Services. He had been shot at in the Sahara, and seen people drown in the Mediterranean. It costs £3,000 per annum for the Children's Society to give the therapeutic care he needs. Christingle collections can be designated for this work.

## Mural celebrates 175 years at Leaffield

BISHOP Colin officially opened a commemorative piece of art work by local artist, Emily Cooling. The mural celebrates the 175th anniversary of Leaffield CE Primary School, near Witney, Oxfordshire. Bishop Colin visited the school last month to open the mural which shows the school and the church at the heart of the village community.

Photo: Simon Bentley







## ACTION BY CHRISTIANS AGAINST TORTURE ACAT-UK

Imagine what it is like to be unjustly imprisoned and tortured.

ACAT is an ecumenical movement and a registered charity (no. 1072628). We are a campaigning organisation that takes up individual cases and situations in countries where torture, assassination and death threats are widespread and often hidden by ruling governments. ACAT seeks to make individual Christians in the UK and their Churches aware of one of the major evils of modern society. Remembering that Jesus himself was a victim of torture, we aim to involve Christians in its abolition.

Our Patrons include – Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Bishop Declan Lang, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Archbishop John Sentamu and Professor Lord David Alton.

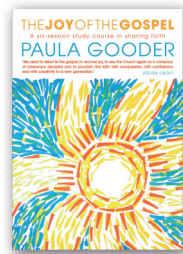
You can help us by learning about our work, joining us in prayer, and sending appeals to governments and embassies. We run an annual Christmas Greetings campaign posting messages to those of any faith or none who have been unjustly imprisoned and often tortured.

Even just a coloured greetings card is of enormous help to someone in a darkened cell. A similar campaign at Easter focuses solely on Christian prisoners.

For information, materials and how to join us see [www.acatuk.org.uk](http://www.acatuk.org.uk), or e-mail [uk.acat@gmail.com](mailto:uk.acat@gmail.com).

Or write to us at 19 The Square, Knowle Park, Bristol BS4 2ST

# FOOD FOR LENTEN THOUGHT

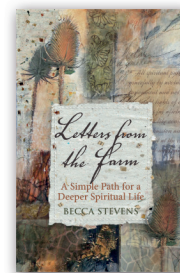


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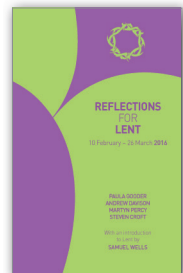


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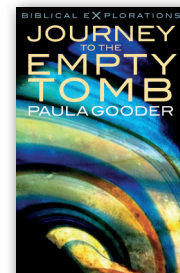


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## #Washday16 - at a church near you



The clergy chapter from Oxford's Cathedral at Christ Church washed a British Red Cross ambulance for #Washday15.

#WASHDAY16 is a great opportunity to tell the Easter story in a creative way, showing that Christians are willing to get their hands dirty in the service of others.

It is about encouraging churches to take part in practical social action during Lent and Holy Week. It's a different take on Maundy Thursday. Traditionally, Christians have washed people's feet – or more recently offered shoe-shining on the streets – on Maundy Thursday, as a way of telling the story of the Last Supper.

The idea is to go out and wash anything and everything to make a difference in your community – it could be washing windows for people who would find that difficult, cleaning cars, washing clothes for

homeless people, or washing up mugs in an office.

You can do your washing on Maundy Thursday itself, during Holy Week, or at some other point during Lent if that is easier. The hope is that people will use their imaginations and think of ways to make a real difference in the community. Some people may like to connect the campaign with fundraising for a water-based charity such as WaterAid.

Our hope is that people will share photos and videos of what they are doing on our website [www.washday.org](http://www.washday.org) to inspire each other, and also Tweet, using the hashtag #washday16.

[www.washday.org](http://www.washday.org)

## Thanking God for people everywhere

### A creative prayer activity for children

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**Duration:** Five to ten minutes.

**Description:** Tell the children that stars appear in the sky over each and every country, serving as a reminder that God is there for all people everywhere and that one star in particular called from another country to see the arrival of God's good news, Jesus.



Ask the children to write Peter's words from Acts 10:35: "In every country God accepts anyone who worships him and does what is right" on one side of their star. On the other side encourage them to quietly and prayerfully stick sequins to represent different prayers for their family and friends.

From LightLive, Scripture Union's online resource filled with children's activities. Reproduced with permission of Scripture Union. [www.scriptureunion.org.uk](http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk)



## Win the *Unofficial Bible for Minecrafters*

SINCE 2009, Minecraft has taken the gaming world by storm, winning two major awards and becoming the best-selling PC game of all time, and hugely popular with children and teenagers.

Young miners will love this new interpretation Bible, brought to you by two Minecraft master builders.

Enter a new world – full of exciting quests, danger, and miracles. Walk into the Garden of Eden and see tumbling waterfalls and lush landscapes; accompany Noah as he builds his ark; witness Jesus perform miracles – all created in Minecraft.

The stories from the Bible are retold in block form, capturing the breathtaking adventure of these well-known tales.

The images have been captured directly from the game and combined with text boxes and speech bubbles to explain the stories for over sevens. Written in an easy-to-read style the text is engaging, but explains the events thoroughly for the age group, and includes dashes of in-game humour.

For the chance to win one of three copies of the book, published by Lion Hudson, simply answer the following question: In what year did Minecraft first take the world by storm? Send your answers to Minecraft competition, the Door, Diocesan Church House, Oxford, OX2 0NB. The closing date for entries is Friday 8 January.



## Book now for the Bloxham Faith Festival 2016



Picture: Dave Walker

THE third Bloxham Festival of Faith and Literature takes place from Friday 19 to Sunday 21 February 2016. The Festival – described as a “literary festival with a theological slant” – is sponsored by the *Church Times* and takes place in the North Oxfordshire village of Bloxham, just outside Banbury.

For 2016 the festival has a Shakespearean theme reflecting the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death. The festival contains its usual programme of talks, panel discussions, music and drama. Speakers on Shakespearean items include the Revd Dr Paul Edmondson, who is Head of Research and Knowledge for the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, as well as being a self-supporting priest near Stratford upon Avon; and the leading Shakespeare expert, Professor Stanley Wells. Meanwhile Professor Alison Shell will be talking about Shakespeare and Religion.

Other speakers include the distinguished retired judge, Baroness Butler-Sloss talking about mercy; Professor David Wilkinson on astronomy, and also prayer; and well known broadcaster and former 1980s pop icon the Revd Richard Coles will be speaking about the latest instalment of his autobiography.

The Revd Judith Maltby, Chaplain and Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford,

will be introducing her new project, a collection of essays about Anglican women novelists, with some of the contributors talking about their favourite novelists. Meanwhile, the shortlist for the Michael Ramsey Prize – celebrating the most promising contemporary theological writing from across the globe – will be announced at the festival, and the judges will reveal how they made their choices.

Novelists speaking at the festival include Michel Faber, author of *The Book of Strange New Things* and *The Crimson Petal and the White*; Salley Vickers and Catherine Fox. Also in the line-up are the former Bishops of Oxford and Reading, Bishop John will be interviewing speakers, and Bishop Stephen will be reflecting on the Psalms. Musical entertainment will be provided by the North Cotswold Chamber Choir, and the Shakespeare Revue Company.

On the Sunday, after a Festival Eucharist at St Mary's Banbury, the Archdeacon of Oxford, the Ven. Martin Gorick, will take a walking tour around Stratford-upon-Avon, where he was previously Vicar of Shakespeare's church.

**Tickets are already selling fast, so to avoid disappointment, please book early. For all the details see [www.bloxhamfaithandliterature.co.uk](http://www.bloxhamfaithandliterature.co.uk) or phone 0845 0176965.**



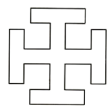
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**Who is like you, O Lord,  
among the gods? Who  
is like you, majestic in  
holiness, awesome in  
glorious deeds, doing  
wonders?**

Ex 15:11

**Giving hope at**

**A warm bed in Milton Keynes**

**This winter, just like the four winters before, a charity made up from a group of dedicated volunteers and a handful of employees will bring support and hope to the homeless of Milton Keynes.**

by Linda Ward

**W**inter Night Shelter Milton Keynes (WNSMK) opened its doors in late November to 15 homeless and vulnerable people who would otherwise be sleeping rough. Funded by donations and local grants, the shelter operates every night from late November/early December through to mid-March.

Guests at the shelter can be old or young, men and women. Some are long term homeless, but many are the victims of circumstance. They may have domestic issues, some will have lost jobs and no longer be able to pay for accommodation. Illness and disability are also factors that make people homeless. Some may have lost or had stolen their identity documents and without an address or documents they are unable to get work.

Supported by seven churches and their congregations, over 400 volunteers provide

a hot meal, friendship and compassion to individuals admitted to the shelter. Each evening volunteers play games, watch films and undertake quizzes with the guests. During the day, they are back on the street, but secure in the knowledge they can get back into the shelter when it opens at 5.15pm.

Important to the work is a welfare team that helps the guests move into more permanent accommodation. This means spaces become free for more homeless individuals throughout the season. The team also helps to replace lost documents and negotiate benefits for those not able to do so by themselves, so that they have a chance to rebuild their lives.

One shelter guest, who asked to remain anonymous, said: "Without the shelter, I don't know what I would have done. I have spent several nights on a friend's sofa, but we had an argument and I couldn't stay there anymore. Since I've been in the shelter, I've been helped to get my ID sorted so that I can claim benefits, I've had access to a GP and feel much more hopeful about the future. The volunteers are amazing, they give up their time to spend with us and the food is delicious."

The Christmas period is a time of family and festivities for most, so for people without a home and little contact



with their families, the shelter provides Christmas Cheer staying open all day to provide accommodation, Christmas Dinner and entertainment.

Last year, the lowest temperature recorded in Milton Keynes was minus six. During the four years they have operated, the shelter has accommodated 320 people, provided 7,174 meals and 3,587 warm beds for the night. It has helped 165 people into more permanent accommodation.

Many organisations provide support through donations of things the shelter can use or through monetary donations to keep the shelter running. The churches involved are St George's - Wolverton, St Andrew's Baptist - Far Bletchley, Newport Pagnell Baptist Church, New Life Church MK, Stony Stratford Community Church, Christ the Vine - Coffee Hall, St Mary's RC - Woburn Sands.

**Linda Ward is the Specialist Volunteer - Marketing, for the WNSMK.**



Above: beds are set up in a church and top right, a man looks forward to a hot meal. Photo: Ed Lee

On the website

Watch videos and see lots more photos of the shelter at [www.winternightsheltermk.com/](http://www.winternightsheltermk.com/)

**Mothers' Union Christmas cards for prisoners**

EVERY year 1,400 Christmas cards are carefully written by Mothers' Union members and posted to Oxfordshire's Bullingdon Prison to cheer up inmates during the festive season.

The mammoth effort is co-ordinated by Captain John Richards, a retired Church Army Captain living in Berinsfield. "Three years ago the prison chaplain said he'd like every prisoner to receive a Christmas card. I stood up at the Mothers' Union Oxford Diocese annual general meeting and told them about it," says John. "They were enthusiastic and they came up trumps. Some branches have made cards, others have bought them and have sat and written them. Mary Sumner House (the national Mothers' Union HQ) has helped and sent us some. It's been a huge effort by people over the three counties for three years and it's just magnificent.

"Everything has to be opened easily for the prison officers to check," said Captain John. The cards have to remain anonymous as they are sent and distributed around the Category A prison.

Captain John said this is just one of many project that overturns any outdated perceptions about the Mothers' Union. "A lot of members give sacrificially to projects in the developing world. They are doing what they can to help others and the same vision applies here. These women have got the vision and find little slots



Photo: Bigstock Photo

where help is needed and fill them. There are a lot of members who in their own quiet way are making positive changes in people's lives."



# Christmas Time

## Vital supplies and a listening ear

FOR many people, the idea of a family Christmas roast with a succulent turkey and all the festive trimmings is nothing but a pipe dream. Jo Duckles visits the West Berks Food Bank, where volunteers work hard to make sure vulnerable people get the supplies they need and, where possible, a few Christmas treats.

I met Sarah Bennet, the administration manager, at the Thatcham Baptist Church, just one of the venues for the food bank, which gives out food from churches in Newbury, Hungerford and the Lambourn Valley. My visit was at the beginning of Advent, when the volunteers were sorting donations, including Advent Calendars for families.

The groceries were mainly donated by churches and shoppers (to collection points at nine supermarkets in West Berkshire). Already donations of Christmas puddings and mince pies were starting to roll in as I sat down with Sarah, and some of her fellow volunteers, Catherine Hamblin, and Sue Stevenson from St Mary's, Thatcham, Colin Edwards from the Christadelphian Church and Vivienne Stewart from the Kennet Christian Centre in Newbury.

*"Sometimes you are the first person that's really listened."*

Sue said: "At Christmas we will try and give them double rations and include mince pies and Christmas puddings, chicken in white wine sauce and chocolate treats for the children, that sort of thing, but it really depends on what is donated."

Sarah said: "At this time of year local businesses do Christmas campaigns for us.



A cuppa and a chat is all part of the service at the West Berkshire Food Bank.

## The scale of the problem

The problem of hunger can be demonstrated by a rise in demand for supplies from Trussell Trust foodbanks. The trust is just one co-ordinator for food banks in the UK.

Between April and September 2015 Trussell Trust food banks gave 506,000 bags containing supplies to last for three days to people in crisis, compared to 493,000 in 2014. And while West Berkshire saw a slight drop in the number of people needing food banks over the same period (1,366 from April to September 2015 and 1,715 from April to September 2014), there are still many people who are in need.

[www.trusselltrust.org](http://www.trusselltrust.org)

We give them a specific list and they are very generous in how they support us."

It's not just about the food, but offering a listening ear to the clients who arrive at the church with a voucher from an official agency such as social services. "I think that's as important as giving them food," says Vivienne. The volunteers were aware that the friendly café style area is a far cry from the harsh, official job centres and other agencies where many of the clients have to go to claim benefits.

The volunteers say their motivation is the opportunity to help people. Sue said: "It's like the story of the Good Samaritan.

How can you pass by on the other side of the road when you can see a need and can do something about it? Sometimes you are the first person that's really listened. You are not judging them, but are there to listen and hopefully send them away feeling more confident, even if you can't change their situation."

Colin, a retired deputy head teacher, said: "This is a non-judgemental response to people's needs. Sometimes there is a big barrier to people just coming through the door and asking for something." As well as cupboards full of tinned soups and vegetables and pasta and rice, there were boxes filled with various toiletries. Colin said: "One client had a 14-year-old daughter and I asked if he needed anything else. She had written down shampoo and when I checked we had just one bottle. I gave it to him and could see in his face he was really pleased. Something like that can make all the difference to a teenager."

When clients arrive, the volunteers need to know what facilities they have at home. "Some don't have a cooker, only a microwave, and some are living rough," said Catherine. They told the story of one homeless man who came in dirty and they asked him if he would like a wash. "He went into the disabled toilet. He was in there for ages but when he came out he looked and felt so much better," said Vivienne.

On the website

Hear the volunteers talk about why they are involved in the foodbank at [www.oxford.anglican.org/foodbank](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/foodbank). Learn more at [westberks.foodbank.org.uk/](http://westberks.foodbank.org.uk/)



just two shelves of the packed cupboard at Thatcham Baptist Church. Photos: Jo Duckles

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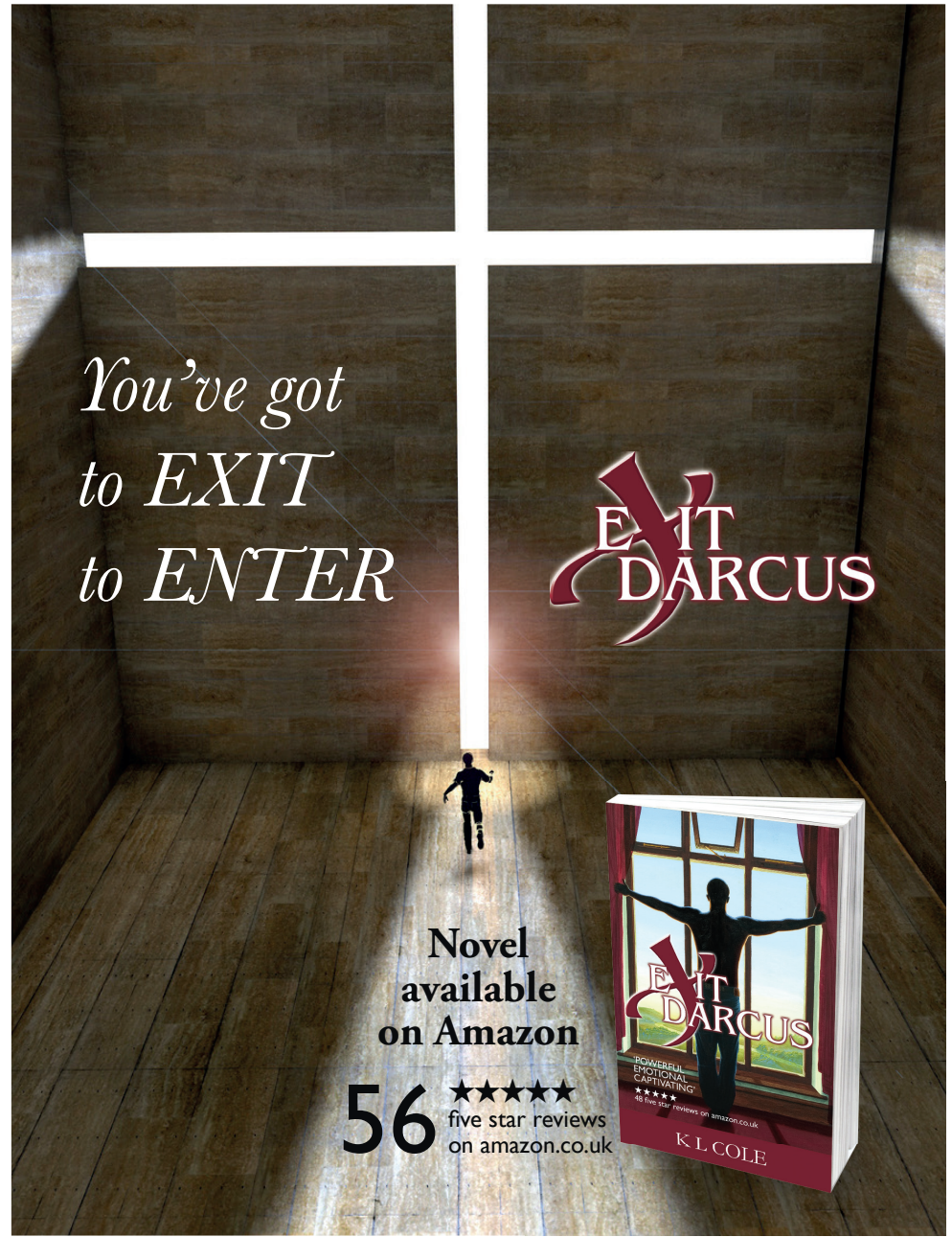
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85% of people who complete the programme at Gilead remain drug free, in employment and with a healthy support network when reviewed 1 and 2 years after they leave. We are extending our facilities to make that a reality for more people, and we have built the first of three purpose-designed bungalows.

Since 2013, 'Grace Lodge', as we've named it, has become a safe home for male Clients, house parents and key support workers, who live in an extended family environment. Already, 18 men have stayed at

Grace Lodge during their rehabilitation, so it's having a massive impact on people's lives and families. Gary (whose story is on this page) often spends valuable time with our Clients at Grace Lodge when he comes to volunteer on the farm.

Plans are underway to complete the next bungalow, 'Faith Lodge', to provide purpose-built accommodation for up to 8 female Clients at a time, plus support workers and house parents.

If we had all the money right now, we could build it in 7 months; but we realise it will take a little longer as we have to fundraise £500,000. We are approaching grant funders, who are more willing to help now that we can show them the results from Grace Lodge. We know from experience that we will also need the support of the many generous people who read stories like Gary's, and want to use their finances to make a significant difference.

At Gilead, we do as much as we can to be self-supporting (including using ground-source heating and solar energy in the new bungalows, opening up a bore hole for our own water supply, and using farm-generated profits to help pay for rehab services). But we cannot complete this next bungalow without financial help. Would you please consider supporting us as we build Faith Lodge, to expand the work and enhance the quality of rehab for our female Clients?

Please use the donation coupon on this page, or donate online at [www.gilead.org.uk](http://www.gilead.org.uk). If you would like to offer an interest free loan, or discuss making a donation, please call our Trustee Chris Cole on 07957 433973. With your help, we can provide skilled support in a secure environment with family values, enabling people to rebuild shattered lives and families, like Gary has. Thank you.



Staff and Community members outside Grace Lodge

## Forgiveness was the Key for Gary

**Gary Spedding spent his adult life between prison, rehabs and the streets. Now he is married, with two lovely daughters, and holding down a steady job. Something happened ... Gary tells us what ...**

"At the age of three, I went into care with my sisters and brother, due to family violence. Then at the age of 7, my sisters and me were fostered. It was the start of a much worse time for us all, especially the girls.

"I was encouraged by my foster parents to steal; things like milk and bread from outside shops on delivery mornings; coal from neighbours; gas bottles from beach huts. My foster Dad was a criminal with a reputation. I idolised him and tried to live up to that, as he gave us 'jobs' to do.

"I started smoking and taking drugs from the age of 11, as an escape. My emotions were numb, apart from anger. I didn't like myself at all, and never felt like I belonged. At 15 I fell out with my foster dad when he punched me in my face, and left home. By 17 I was in jail for the first time. When I came out, I met a girl, she introduced me to heroin. To begin with, it seemed to be everything I was looking for.

"We had a child, but the drugs multiplied my insecurities, and I treated my girlfriend and son really badly. I had a job away from home, laying cables. It was good money, but I spent most of it on drugs. We split up. In the end I lost the job because I kept letting people down.

"Then I spent years living on the streets; going to prison; going to rehabs. I noticed that Christians always seemed different, either in night shelters or rehab. They were happy, you had to be blind not to notice. "I want some of that," I thought.

"I got a directory of rehabs and found Gilead. In 2009 I was accepted and really liked the farm work and the people. I didn't put up a wall to Christianity, but the rehab was, for me, a break from addiction. In that time I noticed the kindness and grace and love of Ian and Bron and the staff. I'd never seen it like that before. It was honest, no faking it. I could easily spot a fake.

"Then I met Kate at Gilead, and in 2010 we made a decision to leave before we were really ready. That ended badly, with Kate very depressed and both of us using heroin again. A year later, we both decided to commit fully to Gilead.

"This time I did it with my heart, not just my head. The Genesis 10 step process

was tough, but I worked through it over 16 months. The final step was to forgive and ask forgiveness. I never thought I'd be able to do that. I'd filled the void inside my hardness with drugs and alcohol - forgiveness broke down the walls and released the hate. It was like I'd been carrying around a dead horse on my shoulders and it was lifted. Something happened that day.

"Me and Kate stayed on staff, and I learned from watching Ian and Bron how to give God control of my life. I tell the students my story, I find that's really rewarding. Saying 'your way isn't the right way' - people don't like that, but it's right."

Gary and Kate are now establishing their family home, with their daughters. They volunteer to work at Gilead for weekends when the farm manager needs a break. Until recently, Gary had a supervisory job in a quarry, with 12 men working for him, which he has just left [with great references!] to start a new role supervising over 80 part time workers, some of whom may have stories like his.

"I tell people my story. If you put your heart into it at Gilead, you can become a functioning part of society again. But we have free will to choose it."



Gary at work on the farm

### PLEASE CONSIDER SUPPORTING GILEAD

A gift towards our building costs helps us 'set the lonely in a family' where they can receive help as they restructure their lives for freedom. Grace Lodge could not have been built without the financial help of donors just like you. If you would prefer to become a regular financial Partner, we welcome donations of any amount but would suggest £20 per month. If you have any questions about our work, please contact Lois Samuel on 01837 851240. If you have questions about making a larger donation or interest free loan to the ministry, please contact Chris Cole (Trustee) on 07957 433973. You can also visit [www.gilead.org.uk](http://www.gilead.org.uk) to find out more about us and donate online.

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## Divine inspirations

by Alison Webster

**‘...as one from whom others hide their faces, he was despised, and we held him of no account.’ (Isaiah 53:3)**



**W**hy we find some things disgusting is explored

by the philosopher Julia Kristeva. She says that there is a category of stuff which is considered neither subject nor object, but abject. The abject is that which disturbs identity, system and order; that does not respect borders, positions, or rules. The loathsome disobeys classification and does not respect boundaries. Anthropologist Mary Douglas in her famous book, *Purity and Danger*, put forward her now famous definition of dirt as ‘matter out of place’. That which is construed by society as ‘dirty’ or ‘polluted’ is not so because of any intrinsic qualities of its own, but is a relative concept. Shoes aren’t dirty until you put them on the table you eat from.

It doesn’t take much of a step to realise that this is why we consider some people to be loathsome and disgusting. People transgress borders and boundaries and break the rules. People can have ambiguous identities. People can be ‘in between’. Ironically, often such people are consequently vulnerable and in need of support, yet their abjectivity means that they are despised and rejected; acquainted with grief.

Refugees in our world today are the abject ones. Our collective psyche fears them as displaced people that do not fit. They are fleeing the horror of war, persecution and the effects of climate change – taking to the roads and the seas with little but the clothes they wear. Yet it seems that compassion does not come easily in our society.

**“...compassion does not come easily in our society.”**

Christmas furnishes us with a theology to reframe all this. Think of the nativity and the circumstances of Jesus’s birth. It’s all very earthy and dirty. Mary gives birth in a cave or stable, surrounded by animals, with no concession to hygiene or purity. They are en route from one place to another – out of place. After Jesus is born they are further displaced when they become refugees in Egypt – fleeing execution. But this is not an unfortunate diversion from the identity of Jesus, it is essential to it. Jesus was God. Jesus was human. The incarnation represents the greatest boundary transgression ever made – that between the divine and the human. Ultimately our life, and the life of the whole created order, depends on it. We are called to be boundary-dwellers, and embrace those we find there.

**Alison Webster is the Social Responsibility Adviser to the Diocese of Oxford**

### Honorary Canons

EIGHT new Honorary Canons of Christ Church Cathedral will receive their canopies at a special Evensong service on Saturday, 23 January at 6pm. **For more details see [www.oxford.anglican.org/honorarycanons](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/honorarycanons).**



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## A Christmas Story

**Tony Parkins tells a fictional tale about an unexpected Christmas discovery.**

IT was time to tackle the second drawer down. It was something that I’d been meaning to do for several weeks... but so far had never got around to it. I’d occasionally been critical of my predecessor as churchwarden, but after a couple of months I’d begun to see that it wasn’t possible to do everything in the time available. He’d retired after 26 years of sterling service and although I’d only been in post for a fraction of that stint, already I could begin to see some cracks appearing in my complacent façade. So, with some trepidation I pulled out the large drawer and placed it onto the vestry floor.

As I’d half-expected, it was a real treasure trove. There were service sheets dating back to the 1950’s and a set of PCC minutes relating to the parish merger during the following decade. There was even a set of half a dozen hymnbooks from the 1930s.

I sorted out what might be beneficially recycled, and what might be retained for historical interest. Then as I was almost finished, I saw a slight reflection from the dim vestry light. I squinted down, peering at the source more closely, and spotted something that seemed to have become wedged into the frame of the drawer. Gently, I pulled at it with my fingernails for several seconds without success, and then suddenly it came loose. It seemed to be an old coin, and how long it had been there was anyone’s guess.

“I never did find that penny,” said a soft voice from behind me, and I started slightly, since I hadn’t heard anyone enter the room. Slowly, I arose to see a man of the cloth. It wasn’t our Rector, nor any of the clergy from adjacent parishes, but even so his face seemed familiar. He had an air of ethereality about him, as though he wasn’t quite of this world.

“I put the offertory into that drawer as usual at the close of my final service,” he went on, with a slight smile, “this being before we got that nice new safe.” He glanced across the room, and automatically my eyes followed. New, I thought with sudden suspicion, since surely it was far older than me?

He went on: “I was painfully aware that I was a penny short, because my entry on the register didn’t tally...” I understood exactly how he felt, since I’d acted as Sidesman myself on occasion, and knew just how easy it was to make a minor mistake with the money. He said: “I hunted high and low for it the following day, but without success... as you can see. Still, I expect it must be worth a few bob by now.”

“Perhaps,” I agreed, since it seemed to have been newly minted, and was in excellent condition.

“It’s the little things that bind us,” he said sagely, as though a large load had been lifted from his shoulders,



“and I’m so glad that it’s finally been found, since now I can rest more easily. Also, I do hope that it will solve your difficulty with the church roof.” Clearly, he knew all about our current appeal, with which we’d got a long way to go before we could consider ourselves... well, watertight.

Then I held it up to the light in order to examine it further. Yes, it was indeed old, and the head was that of George V... so good King George V was firmly on the throne when this was minted. I turned back towards my companion and blinked, since there was no trace of my mysterious visitor and there had been no sound of him leaving.

Then my eyes fell on the framed photographs of our Rectors past and present on the vestry wall. “Oh, my,” I breathed since there he was, smiling slightly out at me just the same as he’d been doing a few seconds previously in the flesh...so to speak. The information under the picture read: “Wilfred Watson, Rector 1910 – 1933.”

Then I looked again at the coin, this time at the reverse side, and my hand shook uncontrollably. I was holding a 1933 penny, one of the rarest coins in the world. I’d read that only six or seven such were ever minted, and that most were already accounted for in museums or underneath foundation stones. “Fix the church roof,” I thought, still in shock, since the proceeds from this single 1d would easily cover that, and also allow the parish to make a generous donation towards the recent overseas humanitarian appeal.

“Merry Christmas, Wilfred...” I murmured, “...and to you too,” I half-heard in reply...or was it just my imagination on the wind?

**The end**

**Tony Parkin is the Deputy Church Warden and Treasurer of Hambleden with Frieth.**

**...continued from page 12.**

“We had 50 people from nine countries. Many of them volunteer their time and the parish offered amazing hospitality. I have personally been supported by the community in Wendover over the 10 years we have been here and so many people have offered skills, time and resource to support our work.”

But, as no one fully knows the scale of the trafficking problem, locally or globally, Ruth is passionate about seeing STOP THE TRAFFIK expand its work and achieve its vision. Earlier this year she went through a rigorous process resulting in the charity being

selected to be the *Financial Times* Seasonal Appeal Partner for 2015/16. The appeal runs through December 2015 and January 2016, to raise money and increase awareness. Over the last 10 years the *Financial Times* has raised £16 million for various charities through the annual appeal.

Ruth added: “I am always moved and encouraged by the incredible people who give their time, generosity and skills to our work. It’s been the sharing of knowledge, tools, energy and resources that makes the vision come alive. I’m grateful for the support of hundreds of thousands of people who are a part of the global

movement and urge us all to continue or join in to work together to STOP THE TRAFFIK.”

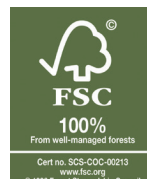
Last month STOP THE TRAFFIK launched a report to inform and resource investors and directors across business to consider risks and the impact of trafficking.

**On the website**

For more see: [www.stophetraffik.org](http://www.stophetraffik.org) to download the business report see: <http://tinyurl.com/pcedllr>

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# 12 God in the life of...

**AS the CEO of STOP THE TRAFFIK, Ruth Dearnley has spent the last 10 years campaigning for an end to the horrific modern-day slave trade. Ruth tells Jo Duckles about her journey and why she is so excited that STOP THE TRAFFIK is this year's *Financial Times* Seasonal Appeal partner.**

I met Ruth at her home, the vicarage in Wendover, where she started by telling me about the launch of STOP THE TRAFFIK on Freedom Day, 25 March 2007, which marked the 200th anniversary of the Abolition of Transatlantic Slave Trade. The former teacher had always felt drawn to human rights and advocacy work.

Her Christian journey began as she was growing up in Upton, on the Wirral. "My parents had a strong Christian faith and my faith journey continued when I went to university. I have never sensed a space where God does not exist but my faith developed and changed a lot in my understanding that God is as much mystery as known. Fundamentally I think Jesus knew what he was talking about when he summed it all up with 'love God and love your neighbour as yourself'. We are called to work that out."

**"STOP THE TRAFFIK is about shining a light into dark places."**

Inspired by Grace Allen in the television drama *LA Law*, Ruth went on to read law at Newcastle University. "For me the star in this American television legal drama was a character that inspired me. In my university interview I asked the professor if he had heard of *LA Law*! He was taken aback but warmed to the idea that I had been inspired to speak up, craft an argument and advocate for those who had no voice."



Ruth at home in Wendover, with the STOP THE TRAFFIK website on her laptop.

After university Ruth followed in her mother's footsteps and became a teacher, moving to London where she worked in the East End, for an inspiring headteacher called Hilary Chalke. "It was a Church of England school where 100 per cent of my class were Bengali the year I arrived. I learnt so much about other faiths, living alongside each other and the experience affirmed what that meant for me. The people around me who served selflessly and who had nurtured a deep faith, were the people who were much less fearful of difference, embraced their neighbour and included all."

It was in London that Ruth met and married the Revd Mark Dearnley, who is now the Vicar of the Wendover and Halton Benefice. Shortly after having their first child, Charlie, who is now 21, they moved to Hook, in Chessington. There they had Esther, who is now 20. At that time Ruth was a member of the Spring Harvest leadership team, where the seeds of the idea of STOP THE TRAFFIK were first sown. Steve Chalke MBE, is a Baptist

minister and the Founder of STOP THE TRAFFIK, which was created by initially bringing together organisations that were interested in preventing and raising awareness of people trafficking. "We marked the 200th anniversary by creating Freedom Day to recognise that the work of Wilberforce and many others was historically significant, but the challenge to us is the extraordinary scale of people trafficking in our world today. By its nature it's hidden and we need to highlight how traffickers exploit and deceive. Traffickers seek to operate in shadows and STOP THE TRAFFIK is about shining a light into dark places," says Ruth.

STOP THE TRAFFIK became a registered charity in 2008 and has been focused on the prevention of the crime. It seeks to empower people to take action, helping people to understand what trafficking is, how it affects them and what can be done about it. "It's about helping the mother whose children may be vulnerable to traffickers that regularly come visiting their community. It may be the prison

officer who doesn't recognise that some of their inmates have been victims of trafficking. It is the teacher who may not realise the young girl playing truant is being expertly groomed by the trafficker as she stays out of the classroom," says Ruth.

She talked passionately about the campaigns STOP THE TRAFFIK has launched over the years. These include Chocolate Unwrapped, highlighting the plight of children as young as 10 who are trafficked, beaten and forced to work in dangerous conditions collecting cocoa beans on the Ivory Coast. "The chocolate campaign enables us to tell the story of trafficking to small children," says Ruth. There is also the Gift Box, a large, attractive box placed on a street. Passers-by are invited inside, where they find themselves in a dark cell. This highlights the attractive offers of work made by traffickers to vulnerable people, who then find themselves conned into a life of gruelling labour or prostitution.

**"It's about helping the mother whose children may be vulnerable to traffickers."**

The last decade has seen Steve Chalke become the Special Adviser on Community Action to the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. STOP THE TRAFFIK has made it a priority to work in partnership with a host of organisations and individuals. Ruth is excited that its partners are as diverse as Greater Manchester Police, technology and marketing global experts who are supporting STOP THE TRAFFIK to use an app that will help people anonymously report suspicious activity. She was delighted that STOP THE TRAFFIK's fifth Global Conference took place at St Mary's, Wendover, with delegates staying in the homes of members of the congregation. Previously the conferences have been held in Chicago, Mumbai, Rio, and London.

**Continued on page 11...**

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## Birth and death intertwined

By the Rt Revd Colin Fletcher

One of the challenges I set myself each year is to find a relevant image to go on the Christmas card I send out. This year's search was comparatively easy since, as the Acting Bishop of Oxford, I looked afresh at the riches of the art in our Cathedral at Christ Church – and I was not disappointed.

One of my problems with many of the images of Jesus as a baby is that he is given a toddler's face or even that of a young child. It's almost as if the painter or the sculptor has not quite been able to bring themselves to believe that Jesus was a real baby who cried when he was hungry; kept his parents up at night; and wet his nappy like any other child. Being much loved and being divine did not stop him developing in the ways that all of us have done.

Here in this sculpture, which you can see in the Cathedral, it seems to me that the artist has not fallen into the trap of thinking of Jesus as someone other than he was. I love the way that Jesus's arms circle round his head. Judging by my own grandchildren, babies do manage to get themselves into pretty extraordinary positions when they are asleep and this child is no exception.

But for me there is more to it than that. Somehow the encircling arms speak of the way in which Jesus's love encompasses the whole world. Recent events may make it difficult to believe that love is going to have the final say when we see so much evil and suffering around us, but that is the



The child From *The Mother and Child* by Rita Phillips. Photo: Matthew Power

glorious hope of this and every Christmas. But it only exists as a hope when linked to Jesus's personal journey from birth to death – from the stable at Bethlehem to the Cross outside Jerusalem. As St John puts it so clearly: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' (John 3:16.)

So where is that note of future pain struck in this crib scene? Well, not, I think, in the baby himself. There is something that is just immensely peaceful about him. The figure of Mary that stands alongside the manger does have a note of sadness to her though her gaze, like that of many a mother, is one of intense love.

But my attention was drawn to the crib the baby is lying in. The sculptor, Rita Phillips, has used a quern, an instrument used for producing flour. One commentator has written this about it 'Jesus lies in the cavity where the grain would be placed for grinding, alluding to the crucifixion, in which Jesus was crushed to death but after which he became the Bread of Life that we enjoy today.'

Death and life; suffering and love; birth and crucifixion – all are intertwined in this sculpture. If you have not seen it yet can I encourage you to pay a visit to the Cathedral and to take a good look.

And may this Christmas and New Year be a blessing to you in every way.

**The Rt Revd Colin Fletcher is the Acting Bishop of Oxford.**

## Praying through Christmas

by David Winter

Yes, it's busy. Not just Christmas cards (getting them, writing them, finding addresses, buying stamps), organising the turkey, looking for presents, there never seems to be enough time! The down-side is that in a monsoon of activity, we may find that prayer has slipped off the agenda. So is it possible to enjoy all the excitement and maintain our regular disciplines of reflection and prayer? Is there a way in which all the 'busy-ness' can become oil to fuel our devotions rather than a flood to drown them? May I suggest a few ways to ensure that your Christmas prayers are part of the season rather than a brake on the festivity.

### 'Only remember the poor'

At the first great Council of the Church at Jerusalem a few years after Pentecost, several weighty issues of theology and pastoral care were addressed. Its findings were carefully laid out, instructions given and principles established. The document ended with those four words. 'Only!' However much we get caught up in anything else, if we are true followers of the One who brought 'good news for the poor' we shall need to 'remember' them. Food banks in Britain, the homeless, Crisis at Christmas.

### Refugees

In Matthew's nativity story, the child Jesus and his parents were refugees across the border in Egypt, fleeing the threat of a king who would go to any lengths to maintain power. As hundreds of thousands of people flee from similar threats in the Middle East, compassion demands that we remember them.

### People you know

Among our friends and acquaintances there will probably be several we can think of for whom celebrating Christmas will be difficult and even painful: the newly bereaved, people living on their own and unable to get out through age or handicap, and those for whom Christmas brings painful memories. I have a friend whose student son died at Christmas a few years ago. My brother's wife died on Christmas Day, half way through dinner. Such things can cast a shadow over even the most welcome family occasion. At Christmas we can hold them in God's love.

### Peace on earth

We shall hear the words of the angel to the shepherds: 'I

bring you good news of great joy, a Saviour. . . Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.' Jesus was born into a warring world in a nation that was under enemy occupation, yet the message of his birth was 'peace'. The 'son' who would be given to us, says Isaiah, is 'the prince of peace'. He would 'make peace through the blood of the cross', says St Paul. What better season than this to pray for that divine gift of peace, shalom, in our divided world?

### Ponder

At the end of Luke's story of the birth of Jesus he tells us that Mary 'treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart'. We shall hear again what the poet John Betjeman called 'the most tremendous tale of all'. Minutes spent like Mary treasuring these words and 'pondering' them will be blessed. To 'ponder' is to 'consider carefully', to weigh things up. This story, so simple a child can understand it, so profound that a life-time is too short fully to grasp its meaning, surely deserves a touch of pondering this Christmas!

**Canon David Winter is a former Diocesan Adviser on Evangelism, a former BBC head of religious affairs, a broadcaster and the author of many books.**

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# January prayer diary

The following is for guidance only, please feel free to adapt to local conditions and, if you wish, produce your own deanery prayer diaries.

"Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." - Proverbs 16:3

*Pray to the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit for:*

**FRIDAY 1 Bank Holiday St Luke, Maidenhead:** Sally Lynch, Terrie Robinson, Nicola Hulks and Sonya Clarke. For growth in faith for all church members. For our work to develop our buildings. St Luke's Academy.

**SATURDAY 2 New Windsor Team Ministry:** Margaret Bird, Ainsley Swift, John Quick and Kate Harrison. Pray that the church would grow in numbers and spiritual depth. That we would serve our community as we make known God's love in Windsor. Queen Anne First School, Trinity St Stephen School.

**MONDAY 4 Old Windsor:** Adel Shokralla, Mary Hutchinson, Lynne Thorogood and Roger White. For growth under the guidance of our new Vicar; for the embracing of change and positive responses to the challenge it brings. That we may be led by the Holy Spirit in our work with children and young people. For continued development and progress, academic and spiritual, at St Peter's School. The Royal School.

**TUESDAY 5 The Cookhams:** Nick Plant, Helen Chamberlain, Joanna Ellington, David Joynes and Charles Walmsley. Pray that we may discern God's mission for the Cookhams and have the courage to see it through. Pray that our churches may be a place for all in our community. Holy Trinity School, Cookham Dean School.

**WEDNESDAY 6 Epiphany St Lawrence, Waltham:** Phil Watts and Carole Perkins. For the transition to a new priest in charge. For continued growth of the work with children and families.

**THURSDAY 7 White Waltham with Shottesbrooke:** David Andrew and Carole Perkins. Thank God for the completion of our new hall in the churchyard at White Waltham, and pray that God would use it for his glory and to bring many people to know him. For our young families in particular and the huge pressure they are under - that they would still be able to grow in faith and live for God. White Waltham Academy.

**FRIDAY 8 Deanery of Aylesbury:** Andrew Blyth, Ann Beaton, David Morris, David Elliott, Antony Rablen, Phil White and Roger Williams. For wisdom, innovation and boldness in our response to new

housing developments around Aylesbury. For new partnerships and ways of supporting ministry in our multi-parish rural benefices.

**SATURDAY 9 Aylesbury Team Ministry:** Gareth Lane, Julie Willis, Luke Lee and Donald Rydings. Give thanks to Almighty God for his faithfulness in providing for all our needs. Pray for us to have the wisdom and courage to see and participate in his plans for us. St Mary's School, Berryfields Primary Academy, Berryfields Primary School.

**MONDAY 11 Bierton and Hulcott:** Mark Ackford and Suzanne Ackford. For our mission and outreach to the new areas of housing development within the benefice. For the pupils and staff of our two church schools, Buckingham Park CE Primary School and Bierton CE Combined School. Diocesan Advisory Committee Meeting.

**TUESDAY 12 Bedgrove:** Martin Kuhrt and Marie Carey.

**WEDNESDAY 13 Plough Wednesday Bernwode:** Priscilla Slusar and Jenny Edmans. For the churchwardens of the parishes in our benefice who work so hard to ensure that everything runs smoothly in our churches. For the Revd Valerie Plumb, our Rural Dean for Mission and Development, as she supports the work of rural ministry across the Buckinghamshire Deaneries. Brill Academy.

**THURSDAY 14 Broughton:** Phil White and Shirley Bull. Broughton Church moved at the end of November to the Canal Basin building in Aylesbury. Pray for the settling-in period and for us to see the potential of the new housing development come to reality. For our community coffee shop, more+, that we will see many people's lives changed through it.

**FRIDAY 15 Haddenham with Cuddington and Kingsey and Aston Sandford:** Margot Hodson, Jonathan Hawkins, Trish Mander, Olive Kuhrt, Adrian Collier and Nigel Featherston. For the Haddenham Benefice as it joins together with the Benefice of Stone with Dinton and Hartwell to form the new Wychert Vale Benefice early this year. Pray for coming together well, for new vision, and the appointment of new team members later in the year. For the many children and young people in our parishes; that they will continue to enjoy church and deepen in faith. Pray for those who are leading these ministries to be inspired, have energy

and be supported fully. St Mary's School, Cuddington and Dinton School.

**SATURDAY 16 Long Crendon with Chearsley and Nether Winchendon:** Robert Hutton and John Scholefield. For a new vicar, and for the benefice during the vacancy. For those attending the Area Deans/Lay Chairs Conference.

**MONDAY 18 Risborough:** David Williams, James Tomkins, Tony Bundock and Jennifer Locke. For our new children's worker, Ryan Romano, and the work he is continuing with our children's groups and in local schools. For the development of our Life Groups with Clare Bellini as the new coordinator. St John's School, Speen School, Monks Risborough School, Longwick School. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

**TUESDAY 19 Southcourt:** Alan Foster. For the appointment of a new vicar. For relationships within the church during the vacancy.

**WEDNESDAY 20 Stone with Dinton and Hartwell:** Peter Rich, Angela Rich and Avril Clark. For discussions with the Haddenham group of churches concerning the new combined Benefice of Wychert Vale. For those involved in appointing a new Minister to replace Peter Rich, Priest-in-charge, who retires at the end of the month. Stone School.

**THURSDAY 21 Walton Holy Trinity:** Andrew Blyth, Richard Phillips, Peter Wheeler, Martin Roper, Andrew Turnbull-Ross and Amy Henderson. For our focus through the year on 'heart and hope' - enjoying God's presence every day and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed. For our local church partnerships for the town chaplaincy, the homeless project and the new foodbank. Lord Carey confirming at St George's, Wash Common.

**FRIDAY 22 Worminghall with Ickford, Oakley and Shabbington:** David Kaboleh and Susan Small. For confidence to share our faith in Christ with our neighbours. For an increase in our congregations. Oakley School.

**SATURDAY 23 Deanery of Bicester and Islip:** Stephen Griffiths, Michael Dockrey, Caroline Todd, Karen Stoddart and Claire Hartropp. Give thanks for an almost full cohort of clergy following recent appointments. Pray for the new outreach initiatives churches have begun.

## Our Bishops and Archdeacons on Sundays

**SUNDAY 3:** For the Archdeacon of Buckingham, Karen Gorham, as she prepares for her new role as Bishop of Sherborne.

**SUNDAY 10: Baptism of Christ.** Bishop Colin confirming at Great Coxwell.

**SUNDAY 17:** Bishop Humphrey Southern confirming at Iffley.

**SUNDAY 24: Homelessness Sunday. Education Sunday.** Bishop Colin confirming at Didcot, Bishop John Went confirming at Wycombe Abbey School.

**SUNDAY 31:** For the Archdeacon of Oxford, Martin Gorick.



**MONDAY 25 Akeman:** Jane Hemmings, Brian Wood, Paul Clifford, Jo Cropp and Grant Lee. For the new youth club. For desperately needed funds for the roofs of Kirtlington and Weston-on-the-Green. That we would reach out in love to our rural communities. Bletchington School, Chesterton School, Kirtlington School.

**TUESDAY 26 Bicester with Bucknell, Caversfield and Launton (Team Ministry):** Verena Breed, Ian Biscoe, Becky Mathew, Robert Atkins, Erika Biscoe, Carol Hill, Peter Hill, Peter Wright, Colin Cockshaw, Elizabeth Taylor and Mary Roe. Pray for us as we welcome the people who move into our town and seek to find effective ways to spread the good news of Christ in our community. St Edburg's School, Launton School. Bishop Colin confirming at Wheatley.

**WEDNESDAY 27 Cherwell Valley:** Stephen Griffiths and Geoffrey Price. For plans to engage with the growing

community of Heyford Park. For ongoing improvements to and wider use of our rural churches. Fritwell School. Upper Heyford School.

**THURSDAY 28 Rousham:** Richard Smail. Pray for both priest and people of Rousham.

**FRIDAY 29 Shelswell:** Bill Muncey and Penny Wood. For Alice Goodall, who began her ministry as Team Rector on 19 January. Give thanks to God, who has sustained us during the interregnum, and for those who have been doing the practical stuff on the ground. Finmere School, Fringford School.

**SATURDAY 30 The Ray Valley:** Victoria Mellor, Lisa Holmes and Glenys Edwards. For the equipping of both clergy and laity of the Ray Valley Benefice as they continue through a time of interregnum. For discernment for all those involved in the appointment process for finding a new Rector. Charlton-on-Otmoor School, Dr South's School.

## Prayer for the Bishop of Oxford vacancy

Gracious Lord and shepherd of your pilgrim Church,  
We bless you and praise you that you have gathered us,  
from across this Diocese,  
to be one flock, within one fold.

By your Spirit,  
Give us wisdom, courage and faith  
as we seek a faithful pastor who will sustain us on the journey,  
feed us with word and sacrament  
and nurture our 'Living Faith',  
inspiring us to follow you ever more closely.

This we ask in the name of Jesus,  
our loving, faithful shepherd  
who is the beginning  
and the end of all that we are  
and seek and do. **Amen.**



## Services at Christ Church Cathedral

**SUNDAYS:** 8am Holy Communion; 10am Matins (coffee in Priory Room); 11.15am Sung Eucharist; 6pm Evensong.

**WEEKDAYS:** 7.15am Morning Prayer; 7.35am Holy Communion; 1pm (Wednesday only) Holy Communion; 6pm Evensong (Thursday Sung Eucharist 6pm).

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## Comings and Goings

**The Revd Derreck Lee-Philpot** will take up post as Associate Minister of Cholsey and Moulsoford; **The Revd Terence Winrow** will take up an additional post as Area Dean of Newbury; **The Revd Peter Rich** will be retiring from his post as Priest in Charge at Stone with Dinton and Hartwell; **The Revd Anne Kiggell** will be retiring from her post as Associate Priest in the Deanery of Bradfield and will be moving to permission to officiate.

The following have been given permission

to officiate: **The Revd Lynda Alcock; The Revd Richard Greany; The Revd Richard Cunningham; The Revd Beom-Jin Shin.**

We recall with sadness the deaths of **The Revd David Hemsley and The Revd Gerald Shaw.**

**Amendment from the last issue:** *The new Vicar at Reading Greyfriars (with New Hope Community Church) is The Revd David Walker not The Revd David Gilmour. We apologise for this error.*

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## Courses, training, conferences and workshops in January

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### SATURDAY 9 JANUARY

**Witney:** Jesus women international prayer movement meeting at the Methodist Church, High Street from 11am to 12.30pm. Email [jewin1503@gmail.com](mailto:jewin1503@gmail.com) for details.

### SUNDAY 10 JANUARY

**Cookham:** Epiphany carols by candlelight at Holy Trinity Church at 6.30pm.

### SUNDAY 17 JANUARY

**Oxford:** After Eight service and talks begin at Christ Church Cathedral. They will run every Sunday evening until 6 March from 8pm to 9pm. Theme for this series is 'Landmarks of the Spirit'. See [www.chch.ox.ac.uk/cathedral](http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/cathedral) for details.

**High Wycombe:** Farewell service for the Archdeacon of Buckingham will take place at All Saints Church HP13 6RF at 3pm. All welcome.

### MONDAY 18 JANUARY

**Reading:** PACT (Parents and Children Together) are holding an adoption information event today from 6.30pm to 8pm at 9 Southern Court, South Street, RG1 4QS. Please phone 0300 456 4800 for more information.



Choristers at Christ Church Cathedral. Photo: Kalpesh Lathigra.

### SUNDAY 24 JANUARY

**Prestwood:** Inaugural organ concert on new Viscount organ by Fraser Simpson at 3pm at Holy Trinity Church, followed by afternoon tea. Tickets £10 from [www.htprestwood.org.uk](http://www.htprestwood.org.uk). Come along and see the refurbished church.

### SATURDAY 25 JANUARY

**Oxford:** The Oxford Council for Christians and Jews are holding an interfaith panel discussion 'The binding of Isaac - Jewish and

Christian perspectives' at 7.30pm at the Oxford Jewish Centre, 21 Richmond Road, Oxford OX1 2JL. Email [oxfordccj@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordccj@gmail.com) for details.

### SATURDAY 30 JANUARY

**Oxford:** Chorister for a day - Christ Church Cathedral are inviting boys aged six to nine years old to come along to the Cathedral and find out what it's like to be a Cathedral chorister. Phone 01865 242561 or email [registrar@cccs.org.uk](mailto:registrar@cccs.org.uk) for details.

## Courses and Special Events

**ViB Exploring Vocations 3: Chaplaincy to the Forces - Wednesday 13 January from 8pm to 9.30pm.** Come and explore your vocation and hear The Revd Ruth Hake, Staff Chaplain to the Chaplain in Chief in the RAF (pictured left), talk about her journey. This event will take place at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Churchill Avenue, Aylesbury HP21 8NH. Book your place by going to [www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/vocations-in-the-oxford-diocese-4330195665](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/vocations-in-the-oxford-diocese-4330195665)



in Chief in the RAF (pictured left), talk about her journey. This event will take place at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Churchill Avenue, Aylesbury HP21 8NH. Book

**Death and Dying: Real Life Experiences - Tuesday 19 January from 9am to 4.30pm.** This Sobell Study Centre day is for those who work with patients or carers who are towards the end of their lives, and who wish to explore the dynamics of death and dying. Cost: £90 (includes lunch). Venue: Sobell Study Centre, Sir Michael Sobell House, Oxford OX3 7LE. See [www.sobelleducation.org.uk](http://www.sobelleducation.org.uk) or phone 01865 225886 for details.

**Parish Magazine Workshop: Saturday 30 January.** Do you need some inspiration? Have you just taken over and don't know where to start? In a rut and struggling to keep your publication fresh? Or have you got some great ideas to share? If so, this workshop is for you. The day will run from 10am - 2.45pm at Diocesan Church House, Oxford and will include planning, editorial and design tips. Cost £10 (includes lunch). Email [debbie.dallimore@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:debbie.dallimore@oxford.anglican.org) or phone 01865 208225 for details and to book your place.

**Oxon Spice event - Saturday 30 January.** The next event arranged by Oxon Spice, an independent network of clergy spouses in the diocese, will be held at Christ Church Cathedral at 10.30am to 3.30pm. The guest speaker is Amy Boucher Pye, author of *Finding Myself in Britain: Our Search for Faith, Home & True Identity*. To book your place and find out more email [oxonspice@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:oxonspice@yahoo.co.uk) or phone 01296 424980 or 07780 954879.

**One Way UK workshop - Saturday 30 January.** This puppet ministry workshop will take place from 10am to 4pm at Iffley Church Hall, Oxford. Cost: £15 (bring a packed lunch - drinks provided). Please email [sarahmckearney@btinternet.com](mailto:sarahmckearney@btinternet.com) to book your place and for further details.



### EDUCATION TRAINING DAYS:

- 11 January** - SIAMS Toolkit Workshop at Diocesan Church House 9.30am to 3.30pm.
- 21 January** - MAT Directors' Seminar at Diocesan Church House 6.45pm to 9.15pm.
- 25 January** - Finance Matters at Diocesan Church House 6.45pm to 9.15pm.
- 28 January** - Governance: Becoming an Effective Governor at Holy Trinity CE School, Marlow from 6.45pm to 9.15pm.
- 29 January** - Enquiry Based Bible Teaching for Beginners at Diocesan Church House 9.30am to 3.30pm.

Booking details available by phoning 01865 208272 or email [training@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:training@oxford.anglican.org)